

This process continued for about a minute. The soil paste in the mouth was not put on the floor. Then the tiger crept forward, drifted a bit to the side and rolled over the 'sput-out' paste of soil in such a way that the paste was applied over the wound. It is likely that tigers treat their unreach-

able wounds, not by eating soil, but by applying soil on the wound in form of a paste mixed with saliva.

May 10, 1988

A.S. PARIHAR

3. ON A HUNTING PAIR OF SNOW LEOPARDS IN WESTERN NEPAL

Hunting attempts by snow leopard (*Panthera uncia*) have been observed by several naturalists (Dang 1967, Houghton 1913, Schaller 1972, Shah 1986, Stockley 1928 and Ward 1923). Among others, Dang (1967) reported repeated sightings of pairs of snow leopards hunting and feeding together. Other observers, however, neither support nor refute this viewpoint. Recently I observed a pair of snow leopards hunting together in the Langu valley of western Nepal.

On 10 May 1987, at 0750 hrs, I was monitoring the daily activity pattern of a herd of 41 Himalayan tahr (*Hemitragus jemlahicus*) in the Langu valley of western Nepal. The animals were feeding and moving horizontally on a steep (more than 40°) scrub slope at 3300 m. At 0755 hrs I saw an adult snow leopard slowly descending towards the feeding tahr. When the snow leopard was about 20 m above the tahr it started stalking. At 0756, I saw another adult, but smaller, snow leopard descending through the same route used by the previous one. For convenience I will call the larger snow leopard as leopard A and the smaller one as leopard B. When the smaller snow leopard neared the larger one, it moved to the right and, without stalking, descended towards the feeding tahr. When about 10 m, from the uppermost feeding tahr, it made a sudden rush and chased them straight downwards. Leopard B and the tahr ran about 120 m downwards and once the snow leopard was as close as 3 m to one of the large adult males. But it could not attack as it was off balance. At last the leopard halted on a small rock and looked upwards. Then leopard A started chasing downwards the tahr individuals which had moved to the left when leopard B had given chase. The running tahr and leopard A passed around the waiting leopard B but the latter could not attack the tahr due to their high speed. Leopard A could not catch the tahr either, and finally halted 20 m below leopard B. The entire chase sequence by both the snow leopards lasted less than two minutes.

When leopard A stopped, leopard B started moving upwards. After climbing about 50 m it again started stalk-

ing, facing downwards. Leopard A also started climbing up and once it happened to get to within 30 m of 11 tahr, mainly males, on the steep cliff, standing just above the snow leopard. The tahr gave warning calls and stamped their feet. The snow leopard stared and then ignored them. When leopard A joined leopard B it stopped stalking and both leopards started moving upwards through the pine forest. Before they disappeared into dense pine forest, they were seen sitting and looking back on three occasions. Once, leopard B squatted on the way, which confirmed that it was a female. Though I was observing them from a distance of about 3 km, judging from body size and dominant nature I am sure that leopard A was a male. After the snow leopards disappeared, I saw that the tahr had divided into three small herds and were busy feeding. One hour later one of the herds was seen feeding exactly on the same slope where the snow leopard had stalked and given chase.

Radio-tracking and study of pugmarks had confirmed the snow leopard's solitary nature in the Langu valley of western Nepal. The species appears to associate as mating pairs and as adult females with dependent offspring. Here, mating of snow leopards takes place between January and March (Jackson and Shah 1984). According to Schaller (1977), snow leopards in the Himalaya usually court in March and April and give birth in June and July, but he also mentions observing snow leopard cubs born in August. The gestation period averages 96-105 days (Kitchener *et al.* 1975, Marma and Yunchis 1968). Captive snow leopards are born between April and August, with a peak in May to June (Freeman and Hutchins 1978). These suggest that my observation in the Langu valley could be a late mating season pair of snow leopards. Captive snow leopards breeding pairs remain together for 2-3 days (Schaller 1977). The hunting pair I observed may therefore have been a breeding pair.

December 14, 1988.

KARAN BAHADUR SHAH

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4. CARACAL (*FELIS CARACAL* SOHROBER) SIGHTED IN PANNA FORESTS

I was searching for a man-eater with a search light on the night of 16 March 1987, in Panna district, Madhya Pradesh, when the gleam of a pair of eyes attracted my attention. Initially, from a distance, I thought it was a jungle cat (*Felis chaus*), which is common in the area. As I went nearer, the animal stood up and gave me a frontal view; then it turned to run away, allowing me to observe its tail as well.

Its colour was sandy brown, with whitish underside; the ears were large and tapered. I could not see the ear tuft. The legs were long and the tail hung down almost to the knee of the rear limbs. The tip of the tail (about 10 cm) was darker than rest of the tail.

A few years earlier, H.S. Pabla, the then Director of Panna National Park, was able to procure a skin of caracal (*Felis caracal*) from the same area. There is no doubt in my mind that the animal I saw was a caracal. Ajit

Sonakia, the then Director, Sanjay National Park, Sidhi, had also two years earlier seen a caracal near Raisen, while driving at night from Bhopal to Sagar.

According to Prater (1948, THE BOOK OF INDIAN ANIMALS), the caracal is common in the north and northwest of Cutch and in the drier parts of Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Central India.

On the basis of this evidence, it can now be said that, continuing from Rajasthan and Gujarat (Cutch), caracal are found upto Bhopal, Raisen, Sagar and Panna districts of Madhya Pradesh, and are confined to the Vindhya mountains in Madhya Pradesh. They have not been seen in the Satpuda range on the southern side of the Narmada River.

May 10, 1988.

A.S. PARIHAR

5. SOME INTERESTING ASPECTS OF WOLF (*CANIS LUPUS* LINN.) BEHAVIOUR OBSERVED AT GUDA NEAR JODHPUR (RAJASTHAN)

While on a survey to assess Blackbuck habitats in Rajasthan we were told about a pack of wolves that inhabited an area not far from Guda village. The village has a Bishnoi settlement where the Blackbuck and chinkara have been protected through local sentiments. The local forest guards claimed that there were about 13 wolves in the vicinity.

We sighted a wolf on 9 June 1987 at 0700 hrs near a small waterbody frequented by Blackbuck. Its approach was heralded by a scattering of the animals and birds that were in and around the water. The wolf came out of the area, which is overgrown with *Prosopis juliflora*, and headed for the water. The animal was in good condition and appeavier than the wolves one of us has observed in Maharashtra. It loped quickly over about 45 m of open space looking straight ahead, and had not noticed us sitting motionless on the opposite bank. As it approached to within 5 m of the water's edge its gait changed, and in a

slow crouching fashion it entered the water and sat down. At this point it either saw us, or heard the click of the camera shutter. Jumping hastily out of the water it headed back the way it had come, using a small watercourse as cover.

The sighting made us want to learn more about the wolves. On 14 June at 0600 hrs we headed for the area with the local forest guard, a Bishnoi who was very well versed with local conditions and wildlife.

We found 3 lair sites. They all had been dug in more or less the same way. Each lair consisted of 2 to 4 tunnels dug into sandy mounds around *Prosopis* bushes. One of them had certainly been used very recently. The openings appeared small when compared to the height of a wolf, indicating that they enter and leave by crouching or creeping. (This would be similar to the way the wolf we observed on the previous occasion creeping into the water.) Wolf pugmarks of various sizes were seen entering and